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Psycho-Demographic Determinants of Young Consumers' Intention towards Purchasing Counterfeit Apparel in a U.S. Counterfeit Capital

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The port of Los Angeles and Long Beach in the state of California is the first stop for almost every item that U.S. imports from East Asian countries (e.g., China) (Wright & Baur, 2013). Consumers who live in this geographic area may have much higher exposure to purchase counterfeits than other geographical regions in U.S. Counterfeit, any unauthorized copied goods which has similar characteristics to the original products and are packaged, labeled, and marked exactly as the original one, accounts for nearly 10% of worldwide trade annually (World Customs Organization, 2014). This circumstance led the researchers to investigate factors influencing consumers' attitude and purchase intention towards counterfeits in this geographical region. A number of studies exist focusing on determinants of purchasing counterfeits (e.g., psychographic, demographic, socio-economic); however, there has been lack of studies examining consumers who live in the main poles for importing counterfeits.

The purpose of this study was to examine key factors that influenced consumers' attitude and purchase intention of counterfeit apparel. The unique aspects of this study were to (a) integrate key personality traits and demographic variables and examine the influence of these variables on attitude and intention towards purchasing counterfeit apparel and (b) focus on a specific geographic region which is one of the U.S. main capitals of importing counterfeits. According to the literature reviews related with six personality traits (e.g., Phau & Teah, 2009), we hypothesized the positive influences of the following five personality traits on consumers' attitude towards the use of counterfeit apparel: materialism (desire to possess better things in life), novelty seeking (always looking for something different and new), personal gratification (individual's need for a sense of accomplishment), status consumption (looking for self-satisfaction by showing status and prestige), and value consciousness (concern for paying lower price). We also hypothesized the positive influence of all of these variables on consumers' purchase intention of counterfeit apparel. Negative effect of integrity (individual sense of justice) on their attitude and purchase intention was hypothesized.

Using a survey method, a convenience and purposeful sample of 118 young consumers was selected from students at a large Western university in Los Angeles County. The majority of participants were females (70%) and the rest were males. The participant's age ranged from 18 to 30 years old. The majority was single (92%) and 79% of the participants earned at least bachelor degree. A survey instrument was consisted of four sections: (a) 31 items of six personality traits (integrity, materialism, novelty seeking, personal gratification, status consumption, and value consciousness), (b) attitude (5 items), (c) purchase intention of counterfeits (7 items), and (d) demographic information (e.g., age, gender, income) (6 items). All variables were measured by

adopting existing, reliable measures from previous studies using 5-point Likert type scale, ranging from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (5). All measures displayed the acceptable reliability of .70 or above. The data were analyzed using RStudio 1.1.382 for descriptive statistics and series of multiple regressions to test our proposed hypotheses.

Two separate multiple regression analyses were performed to test two different models: (a) relationships of six personality traits and three demographic variables on attitude towards purchasing counterfeit apparel and (b) relationships of six personality traits, three demographic variables, and attitude on purchase intention of counterfeit apparel (see Figure 1). The adjusted R^2 of the first and second model were .08 and .55, respectively. This tells that the second model was a better predictor for examining the relationships between psycho-demographic determinants and consumers’ purchase intention of counterfeit apparel. No direct significant effects of any personality traits and demographic variables on attitude towards purchasing counterfeit apparel were found in the first model. High significant positive relationship of attitude on purchase

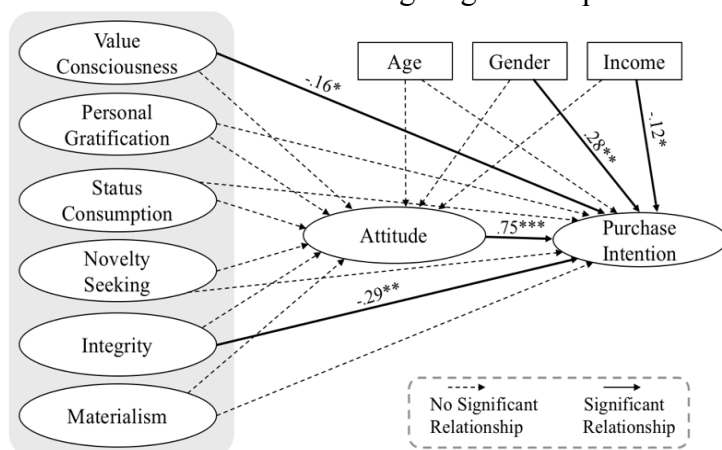


Figure 1. Hypothesized model of this study.

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .05$; and * $p < .1$

intention of counterfeit apparel was found ($\beta = .75, p < .001$). Significant relationships were also presented for the influence of integrity and gender on purchase intention of counterfeit apparel ($\beta = -.29, p < .05$; $\beta = .28, p < .05$). Female participants were more willing to purchase counterfeit apparel than males ($\beta = .28, p < .05$). The results also demonstrated a marginally significant negative influence of value consciousness and income on purchase intention of counterfeit apparel ($\beta = -.16, p < .1$; $\beta = -.12, p < .1$).

In this study, we found that none of the six personality traits played a significant role of conforming the participants’ attitudes towards counterfeit apparel. However, the two personality traits (value consciousness and integrity) along with the two demographic variables (gender and income) played a significant role for their intention of purchasing counterfeit apparel, which are the interesting findings of this study. The results may be different if using study samples from different age groups and (or) various geographical regions. Since we have used a small sample size within a particular geographical region, further studies are suggested using a larger sample size with a wider age range in various geographical regions, and retest and validate our hypotheses. We used multiple regressions to test our hypotheses since our goal was not test the model fit. For future study, it is recommended examining the proposed model fit using a structural equation modeling approach. The result of this study is beneficial for merchandisers and retailers in apparel industry by giving them a profound overview of various personality traits, which have impacts on the consumers’ intention towards purchasing counterfeit apparel.

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